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Next 4 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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MORTON 1724-101
122 MARYLAND AVENUE, N. E.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20002

(202) 544-5300

February 19, 1975

Mrs. Jeanne Davis
Staff Secretary
Room 374
National Security Council
Old Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20506

Dear Jeanne:

This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act as amended (5 U.S.C. §552).

I write to request a copy of all National Security Council Intelligence Directives (NSCIDs) issued since 1948, whether or not they are still in effect. I am making a similar request to the CIA.

(more)

Mrs. Jeanne Davis

Page Two

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As you know, the amended Act provides that if some parts of a file are exempt from release that "reasonably segregable" portions shall be provided. I therefore request that, if you determine that some portions of the requested information are exempt, you provide me immediately with a copy of the remainder of the file. I, of course, reserve my right to appeal any such deletions.

If you determine that some or all of the requested information is exempt from release, I would appreciate your advising me as to which exemption(s) you believe covers the information which you are not releasing.

I am prepared to pay costs specified in your regulations for locating the requested files and reproducing them.

As you know, the amended Act permits you to reduce or waive the fees if that "is in the public interests because furnishing the information can be considered as primarily benefiting the public." I believe that this request plainly fits that category and ask you to waive any fees.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please telephone me at the above number.

As provided for in the amended Act, I will expect to receive a reply within 10 working days.

Sincerely yours,



Morton H. Halperin

mhh/cmm

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

March 17, 1975

Dear Mr. Halperin:

I am writing in further response to your letter of February 19, 1975 in which you request a copy of all National Security Council Intelligence Directives issued since 1948.

The NSC Staff has carefully reviewed these documents and has determined that for the present all of them must remain classified and that they are exempt from declassification under Section (b) (1) of the amended Freedom of Information Act.

You are aware that you have the right to appeal this decision to Mr. Kissinger, in his role as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Such an appeal should be addressed to me as Staff Secretary of the National Security Council.

Sincerely,



Jeanne W. Davis
Staff Secretary

Mr. Morton H. Halperin
122 Maryland Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D. C. 20002

MORTON H. HALPERIN

122 MARYLAND AVENUE, N. E.

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20002

(202) 544-5380

March 26, 1975

Mrs. Jeanne W. Davis
Staff Secretary
National Security Council
Old Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20506

Dear Mrs. Davis:

This is an appeal pursuant to sub-section (a)(6) of the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. §552).

I have received a letter dated March 17, 1975 from you, denying my request for all National Security Council Intelligence Directives issued since 1948. The above letter indicated that an appeal should be directed to you; this letter constitutes that appeal. I am enclosing a copy of my exchange of correspondence with your agency so that you can see exactly what files I have requested and the grounds on which my request has been rejected.

I trust that upon examination of my request you will conclude that the information I have requested is not properly covered by exemption (b)(1) of the amended Act and will make the information promptly available.

As provided for in the Act, I will expect to receive a reply within twenty working days.

If you are unable to order release of the requested information, I intend to initiate a lawsuit to compel its disclosure.

Yours sincerely,



Morton H. Halperin

mhh/cmm

WASHINGTON POST
SUNDAY
MARCH 2, 1975

NSA: Huge Vacuum Cleaner

First of four articles

By Douglas Watson
Washington Post Staff Writer

Seventeen miles northeast of Washington on the edge of Ft. George G. Meade is a huge office complex surrounded by a high chain-link fence, then six strands of electrified wire and then another chain-link fence topped with barbed wire.

The thousands of people who work there refer to the heavily guarded buildings as "the puzzle palace," "Disneyland," or just "the agency."

They are employees of the super-secret National Security Agency, which has the massive task of electronically intercepting foreign communications throughout the world and then deciphering the coded messages to provide intelligence for the U.S. government.

To do its highly classified work, NSA probably spends between \$1 billion to \$1.2 billion annually. The agency's budget is officially hidden, but that is the best estimate of former intelligence officials interviewed.

They believe NSA spends more than twice the FBI's estimated \$434 million budget this year and more than the annual spending for either Congress (\$744 million this year) or the State Department (\$871 million).

NSA has at least 20,000 employees in nearby Maryland and 50,000 to 100,000 military personnel around the world feeding back intercepted communications by the thousands, according to former employees of NSA and other intelligence agencies.

"They've got a huge vacuum cleaner turned on sucking in information from 'round the world," said Perry Howe Ransom, a Vanderbilt University professor who has written extensively about the American intelligence establishment.

Myth and the Madness," that the volume of NSA's communications intercepts "is beyond the imagination of most laymen. I would judge that upwards of a hundred tons of paper a day record the radio and Morse Codes of other nations' communications intercepted by NSA."

All informed sources interviewed agreed that NSA is larger than the CIA, both in personnel and budget. For example, Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, in "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence," estimated that NSA has 24,000 employees and a \$1.2 billion annual budget, compared with an estimated 16,500 employees and \$750 million budget for CIA.

Since its creation 23 years ago by a still-secret presidential directive, NSA had worked hard and largely successfully to stay unnoticed. Even the Congressional Directory that lists the CIA and every other federal agency says nothing about NSA.

"They're about as anonymous as anybody is in our government," said a former high CIA official of "the other agency." NSA officials aren't at all unhappy that the CIA has gotten most of the public attention given to members of the American intelligence establishment.

However, special Senate and House committees are preparing to examine not only the CIA—which accounts for only about 15 per cent of the nation's total annual spending for intelligence-gathering, most often estimated at \$6 billion.

The committees also are charged with reviewing NSA and the other intelligence organizations within the Defense Department that together are estimated to cost \$1.5 billion. Thus far, NSA and the other intelligence agencies have

"The congressional probes are likely to ask whether there have been questionable uses of secret power like those recently acknowledged by CIA Director William E. Colby, who testified that the CIA infiltrated agents into antiwar and dissident groups in this country and kept files on 10,000 Americans.

The investigating committees also are likely to inquire how well NSA, CIA and the other intelligence agencies are doing their jobs and, in regard to NSA, whether all the electronic eavesdropping and code-breaking is really necessary.

NSA was not created by Congress, but by a top-secret 1952 directive from President Truman that established it as a separately organized agency within the Defense Department.

The directive has never been made public—its top-secret status was reaffirmed as recently as last year, and requests to see it were rejected by NSA. So only a few government officials know what the authorizing directive says NSA should be doing and should not be doing.

The NSA director also serves as chief of the Central Security Service (SCS), which in 1972 was established in accordance with a memorandum from President Nixon "to provide a more effective cryptologic organization within the Department of Defense."

The only official, public description of NSA is a brief, vague mention in the U.S. Government Manual:

"The NSACSS provides centralized coordination and direction for certain very highly classified functions of the government vital to the national security. . .

The NSA-CSS provides primary missions—a security mission and an intelligence mission. To accomplish these missions, the director (of NSA) has been assigned the following responsibilities:

“Prescribing certain security principles, doctrines and procedures for the U.S. government.

“Organizing, operating and managing certain activities and facilities for the production of information.

“Organizing and coordinating the research and engineering activities of the U.S. government which are in support of the agency's assigned functions; and regulating certain communications in support of agency missions.”

NSA is divided into these basic units:

- An operations division that oversees the global collection of intercepted communications.

- An office of production that has the job of breaking the intercepted coded messages, translating and analyzing them. It has by far the most employees at NSA's Ft. Meade complex.

- An office of research and development with responsibility for developing communicating and intercepting equipment needed in the never-ending war between the code-makers and the code-breakers.

- An office of communications security that is charged with maintaining the secrecy of this country's coded communications.

- According to a number of former employees of NSA and other U.S. intelligence agencies, NSA's general operation is known as SIGINT for “signal intelligence.” By far the largest SIGINT activity is COMINT, communication intelligence,” which essentially is the interception of radio and teletype messages.

NSA also operates a worldwide ELINT program to obtain “electronic intelligence.” This is the collection of electronic signals not intended as messages to anyone, such as those that emanate from radar equipment. The varying levels of such signals can tell a lot

Another form of signal intelligence is RADINT, or “radar intelligence.” The opposite of ELINT, RADINT involves the active transmission of radar signals to spot such things as missile and plane movements.

NSA has almost unbelievable technological capabilities. It not only can listen to thousands of conversations simultaneously, it has highly sophisticated equipment to then discover what is being said and by whom.

Retired Air Force Col. L. Fletcher Prouty, who wrote “The Secret Team” on U.S. intelligence activities, said recently that NSA is able sometimes to identify an individual's voice from among thousands it is monitoring by computerized comparison of voice patterns.

Nations routinely use various sophisticated techniques to make interception of their radio messages more difficult. For example, they may compress a message of many minutes' duration into a spurt taking only a few seconds or less. NSA regularly intercepts such messages by capturing them on tape and then replaying the tape very slowly until the highly compressed message can be sorted out.

Electronic interception is the easy part of the job for NSA. More difficult code-breaking is then required to understand almost all important foreign communications.

NSA's cryptologists don't use the codebooks of a less complex era. They rely on computers. David Kahn, author of “The Codebreakers,” wrote in 1967, “NSA probably has more computer equipment than any other installation in the world.”

The agency also has a great deal of communications equipment, some of which is visible on the roofs of its buildings. “Somebody told me they're giant golf balls,” said an NSA escort as two visitors looked up at the sensitive equipment.

Two NSA alumni who devised valuable inventions by Congress, the agency said.

NSA needs the special skills of many different kinds of people. A former employee said that a number of blind people work at the agency because their particularly sensitive hearing makes them able to hear sounds on tapes that others would miss. He recalled a military guard's having to break up a fight at the agency between two seeing-eye dogs.

NSA has an extensive global network of listening posts. Kahn estimated that NSA and the American military had more than 2,000 intercept positions, some employing thousands of personnel and others consisting of one person at a radio set.

Former intelligence officers generally estimate that NSA now maintains at least 50 basic communications-intercept land stations.

McGarvey wrote three years ago that “there are slightly over 50 stations active at any given time of the day. They are located in at least 14 countries . . . A minimum of 4,000 radio intercept consoles are in operation at all times.”

Winslow Peck, a former Army enlisted man who did electronic surveillance for NSA in Turkey and Vietnam, said in a 1972 article in Ramparts magazine, “As far as the collection of data is concerned, the military provides almost all the people . . . The three agencies are the U.S. Air Force Security Service (USAFSS), the Army Security Agency (ASA) and the Navy Security Group (NSG).”

“The Army Security Agency is conducting an unprecedented variety of cryptologic missions,” a 1969 Army booklet stressed. “ASA's cryptologic officers are assigned to field stations, some of which are in Okinawa, Japan, Ethiopia and the United States.”

The booklet gave as an example an Army lieutenant in Chitose, Japan, who it said supervised two warrant officers and 90 enlisted men “engaged in analysis and some special compartmented projects.” It added, “Experience are serving in special units throughout the world.”

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The Washington Post

ance (totaling \$97.2 million in loans and \$131.5 million in grants through 1970)," the subcommittee reported.

It said the United States also secretly pledged "continuing interest in the security of Ethiopia and its opposition to any activities threatening the territorial integrity of Ethiopia."

The subcommittee concluded, "These programs and pledges appear to stem primarily from our declared need for Kagnew Station, a communications base in the northern part of Ethiopia." The subcommittee said more than four years ago, "The original unique need for Kagnew appears to have been overtaken by events as well as technology."

• However, it noted in a statement, even more relevant today, "In implementing this 1960 agreement, the United States has now become involved in the military structure and activities of the Ethiopian army. Inevitably this has given us a role — albeit an indirect role according to the statement of American officials — in aiding Ethiopia to put down insurgents in Eritrea."

Many of those Americans recently evacuated from Eritrea, where the Ethiopian civil war is raging, apparently are dependents of American personnel assigned to the base there that NSA uses to intercept communications of Middle Eastern and African governments.

NEXT: Domestic activities.

Involvement in this agreement was not only a commitment to support a 40,000-man U.S. peace army, but also a pledge for continued military assistance which totaled \$447 million through 1970 and economic assist-

CIA and Cult of Technology *Vel. Post. 40px. Nov.*

Bulk of Intelligence Gathered by Equipment

By George C. Wilson
Washington Post Staff Writer

The five-story yellow building with the shrouded windows at 1st and M streets SE—just down the hill from the Capitol—is where much of the Central Intelligence Agency's super-secret and super-valuable work goes on.

Technocrats in the spy business note with pride that most of the windows are cemented over — to foil any enemy agent who might try to record conversations inside by focusing a laser beam on window panes to detect and reconstitute the vibrations voices would make on glass.

To the casual visitor the yellow edifice of secrecy is "Building 213". For some reason, the public is not supposed to know what the Soviets' counterpart agency, the KGB knows—Building 213 is the CIA's National Photographic Interpretation center, known to insiders as N-Pic.

N-Pic is just one arm of the mechanical giant the United States has built to spy on the rest of the world. This giant also has eyes in space, ears all over the globe, an operation that costs billions of dollars each year — dollars that are only minimally accountable to anybody outside the CIA.

It is this mechanical giant — not the James Bonds of the CIA who meet foreign agents at bars at midnight — which gathers the most valuable information for the United States.

"Technology has revolutionized the in-

telligence business, there's no question about it," CIA Director William E. Colby has said.

"If I had to rate everything we did on an A through Z value scale," said a CIA executive who quit the agency a few months ago, "I would give A through U to technical intelligence" — gathering information by satellite, plane, ship, submarine and eavesdropping radio outposts.

Next in terms of productivity, he listed reading foreign publications and analyzing them in a systematic way. Last, the CIA alumnus named covert operations like buying information from foreign agents.

"On a scale of 100," said another former CIA officer in an interview, "I would give at least 70 per cent to technical intelligence; 25 per cent to reading open literature and assessing information obtained through diplomatic contact. No more than 5 per cent to all the covert stuff."

The counterintelligence operations which have provoked the current controversy—with allegations that the CIA has put Americans under surveillance—"is not producing anything at all for the country," he said. "It's just looking up each other's sleeves—personnel management in the whole creepy, backroom world."

He added, "It's time to drop all this Mickey Mouse."

In the bland looking yellow building, N-Pic has processed film from high-flying spy

See SPY, A6, Col. 1

SPY, From A1

satellites. These satellite and other reconnaissance pictures, analyzed by photo interpreters, have helped answer such questions as these asked by anxious Presidents and other top government officials:

- Do the Israelis have the nuclear bomb (they do) and are their nuclear-capable Jericho missiles targeted on Egypt's Aswan Dam (they once were) so Cairo and the Nile Valley could be flooded if all seemed lost?

- Is Russia mobilizing for war (a constant question)?

- Is Russia building a new missile system or just improving the old one (photographs showed the latter)? How many intercontinental ballistic missiles and bombers do the Soviets have?

- Could U.S. Green Berets rescue American prisoners from the Sontay prison camp outside Hanoi?

N-Pic, in answer to that last question, made a giant photo montage of the Sontay camp and proudly showed it off to CIA trainees to demonstrate what the agency could do inside the intelligence factory on M Street.

The Pentagon, in turn, used N-Pic's montage to build a replica of Sontay at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida so the Green Berets could rehearse the POW rescue. The Sontay replica was taken down during the day so Soviet satellites would not see it and tip off Hanoi—testimony to this era of open skies where super powers keep track of each other through camera eyes in space.

N-Pic's effort proved in vain, however, because Hanoi had moved American prisoners out of Sontay by the time the raid was launched on Nov. 24, 1970.

Thus, it can be said that the N-Pic arm of the intelligence giant stretches all the way from M Street to the cold void of outer space, where both American and Soviet cameras look down through portholes of spacecraft whipping earth once every 90 minutes.

mechanical giant require personnel inside—such as the surface electronic intelligence (ELINT) ships that took over from the ill-fated U.S.S. Liberty and U.S. Pueblo; the American submarines which remain close to foreign shores, recording messages and radar signals; the U-2 reconnaissance plane Francis Gary Powers flew over the Soviet Union and its higher-flying successor, the SR-71; communications intelligence (COMINT) outposts around the world where specialists with earphones clamped on their heads listen hour after hour to foreign fighters pilots talking to ground commanders.

Both the successes and failures of technical intelligence have been spectacular. The U-2 was both. It brought back the hard information on Soviet missile progress—although Sen. John F. Kennedy (D-Mass.) kept charging "missile gap" even as U-2s were bringing back contrary evidence in flights from 1956 until 1960.

And it was a failure in the sense that its intrusion into Soviet airspace prompted Premier Khrushchev to cancel the 1960 summit conference with President Eisenhower.

Even without failures, technical intelligence has its limitations. Said one former high ranking CIA executive:

"What technology doesn't do, won't do, and can't do is tell you what people are thinking and what their plans are. We can't read minds with technology, but that's our business—reading minds. The whole purpose of espionage is to find out what people are thinking and doing."

He could have added that the clearest U-2 or Samos satellite photograph does not tell the United States what weapon the Soviet Union or China is working on under the laboratory roof.

But neither the failures—like the U-2 incident, Liberty attack and Pueblo capture—nor the built-in limitations have kept the intelligence community's technical

to its critics.

Wrote former CIA officer

Equipment Gathers Bulk of Intelligence

A 6

Monday, Jan. 6, 1975

THE WASHINGTON POST

Washington Post

1-6-75

Patrick J. McGarvey in his book, "C.I.A.—The Myth and the Madness":

"In intelligence, the reverence accorded technology is open to serious questioning . . . The vaguest hint that something new will afford an opportunity to open another peephole into a potential enemy's domain prompts the loosing of intelligence money and the approval of 'feasibility tests'—which invariably lead to 'further development tests' and finally implementation of a new collection program.

"Critics of these efforts are few," McGarvey added. "for few wish to confront 'the national security' argument flaunted by supporters of intelligence . . . In intelligence, technology has allied itself with bureaucracy, and together they ride roughshod over reason and logic. The result is a maddening, self-perpetuating chaos which has distorted the entire intelligence process to the point that technology has become the goal rather than the means to a goal . . . Our almost limitless ability to collect information has prompted only a few to question the utility of the information that is collected. . .

"The results are frightening . . . As the programs expand, they defy rational management. And we have international incidents resulting from collection programs designed to provide information that will allow the United States government means to avoid such incidents. Intelligence today in almost the ultimate irony . . ."

One man who had a lot to do with making technology so imperious within the CIA specifically and intelligence community generally is Richard Bissell, the former head of the CIA's U-2 program who fell from official grace because of his role as operational director of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba by Cuban exiles

Bissell, now an executive at Pratt and Whitney Aircraft in Hartford, Conn., in an interview traced the birth of the U-2 and how its success blazed the way across the sky for such other technical collection systems, like the SR-71 and satellites.

Back in 1954, Bissell recalled, James R. Killian Jr. was asked by President Eisenhower to head a committee which would recommend ways to preclude another Pearl Harbor-type surprise attack on the United States.

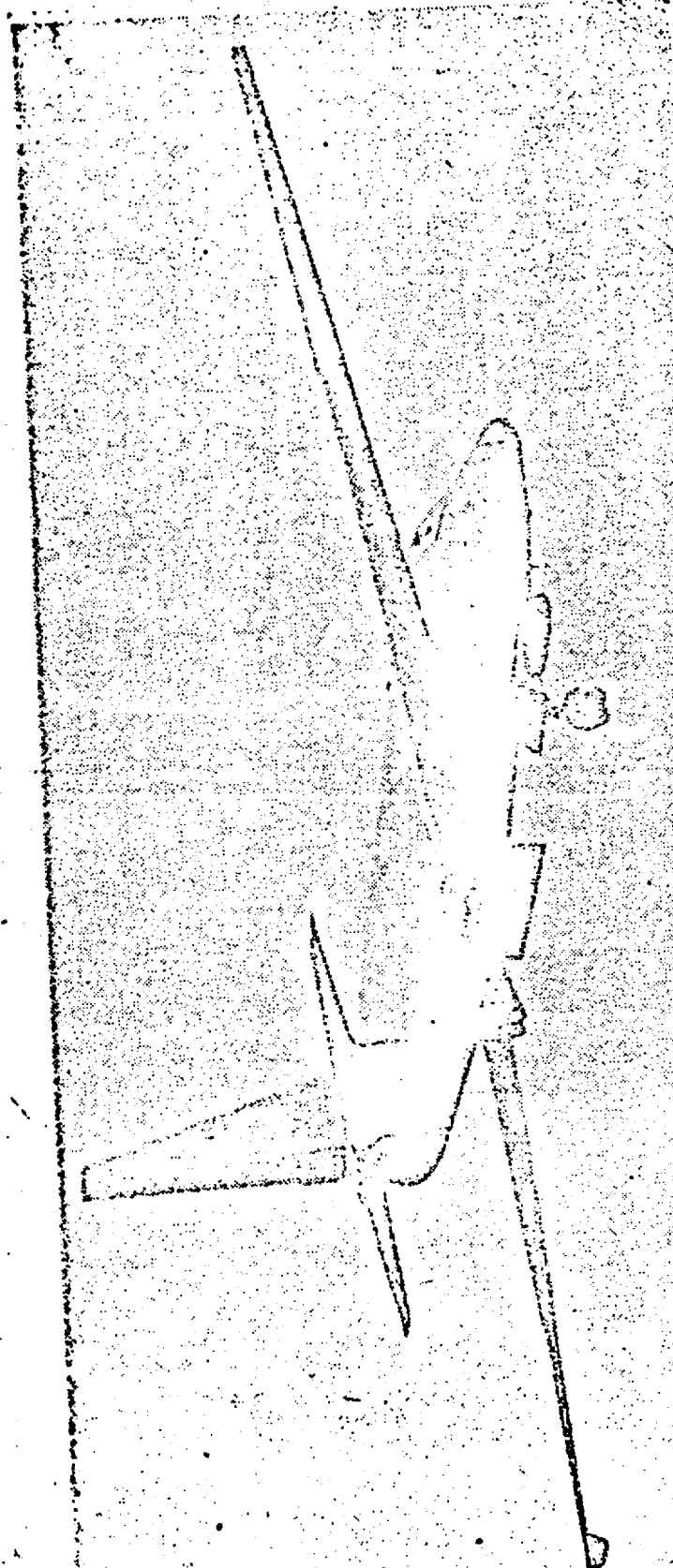
"The intelligence panel of that committee," Bissell said, "became convinced that we needed an over-flight capability. They also came on the U-2 design as it had been submitted" to the Air Force in 1953 or 1954 by Clarence L. (Kelly) Johnson of Lockheed.

"In the autumn of 1954," Bissell said, "the members of that intelligence panel — and with them the whole Killian surprise attack committee — endorsed a proposal that a high altitude reconnaissance aircraft configured exclusively and expressly for reconnaissance be built based on the Kelly Johnson concept — and that it be built with maximum security and maximum speed."

The concept was to put glider-like wings on a jet aircraft so it could fly in the thin air of high altitude, cut of the range of anti-aircraft guns and rockets. Also, the theory was that the new spy

Washington
Post
1-6-75

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Associated Press

The high-flying subsonic U-2 reconnaissance plane developed and built for CIA work by Lockheed was a major technical success.

thin air where the U-2 would fly.

"This was one of those things they call a calculated risk," said Bissell in discussing the conclusions about the threat of the SA-2 to the U-2.

The CIA's U-2 started flying over Russia in June,

See SPY, A7, Col. 1

20 U-2s, minus engines.

With the U-2 on the way CIA photo-interpreters, like the one in Building 213, studied photographs of the Soviet SA-2 Guideline rocket that Russian gunners would shoot at the U-2 if their radar detected it. The missile's fins, the specialists concluded, were too small to guide it accurately in the

have been the last time a military plane was built for less than the agreed upon amount. Bissell said "there was a \$3 million under-run." Today, each reconnaissance plane and satellite — like the Big Bird satellite lofted into space this year by the giant Titan IIAD rocket — costs more than the whole \$10 million paid for the first

plane would be safe from other interceptor fighters because their engines could not push them to the 14-mile altitude of the U-2.

Put in direct charge of the U-2 project Bissell in the spring of 1955 placed an order with Lockheed for 20 U-2s at a total cost of \$21 million.

The U-2 contract may

Washington Post

1-6-75

GPY, From AG

1956, Bissell said, and enjoyed success until May 1, 1960, when one of those supposedly inaccurate SA-2 rockets shot Powers out of the sky and into a diplomatic uproar.

Looking back over the whole U-2 program and acknowledging its value in settling the missile gap question, Bissell said "the greatest value" for the country was the "proof you could learn as much as you could by looking down from above."

"It whetted the appetite of this government and increased its willingness to develop systems of this sort of intelligence collection," Bissell said.

Given this appetite, the Soviets' Sputnik I, launched on Oct. 4, 1957, looked appealing as another way to look down on the other country.

Aerial intelligence-collection in the two decades since the U-2's birth quickly advanced to the SR-71 and an entire family of satellites ranging from the comparatively simple Samos to the sophisticated Big Bird which can take pictures and do various other things—like intercept communications.

The technological explosion also advanced to intelligence-collecting from ships, submarines and land listening posts. The CIA, National Security Agency (NSA) Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Army, Navy, Air Force and the military-industrial-scientific academic complex have become enmeshed in the American intelligence collection effort over the last 20 years.

The citizens commission President Ford has named to investigate the CIA is chartered to focus on the agency's domestic activities, not the overlaps in the American intelligence community as a whole. But Congress is expected to look into the duplication between CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency. NSA is the sprawling intelligence complex headquartered at Fort

Meade, Md., which is believed to have a worldwide payroll of 100,000 people, one big reason the total bill for American intelligence agencies is estimated at around \$15 billion, not counting the missiles and ships and other support the Pentagon furnishes.

The intertwining, charge congressional and other critics, is inefficient, costly, and sometimes fatal. The overlapping showed up embarrassingly for the intelligence community when NSA's warning against sending the Pueblo out on a mission off North Korea in 1968 got lost in the DIA maze in the Pentagon.

Also, the post-mortems on the Pueblo spy mission failed to show that the trip was necessary from an electronic intelligence standpoint—bitter news for the Navy crew imprisoned and tortured in North Korea for 11 months and the family of the sailor who was killed during the ship's capture off Wonsan in January, 1968.

The late Sen. Allen J. Ellender (D-La.), while chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, told a reporter that the amount of money the intelligence community spends for information nobody has time to process or read is "a national scandal."

The next few months will tell whether Congress, during its reappraisal of the CIA, will attempt to rein in the technical giant.

In the meantime, it will be business as usual at places like N-Pic within the CIA's far-flung complex.

"Honest, Sir," said the policeman at the gate of N-Pic. "I don't know what that place is other than Building 213." By contrast, two women behind the gate said, "Yes it is," when asked if the place was indeed N-Pic.

It doesn't take the skill of James Bond to get inside the lobby of N-Pic, note the CIA employees on coffee break in the cafeteria and read the Christmas greeting of "peace, peace, peace" and "joy, joy, joy" on the wall behind the guard.

CIA Collects Bulk Of Its Intelligence With Hardware

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

22 August 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

I submit the attached discussion of the
"fact of" photographic reconnaissance for possible
consideration by the NSCIC. I have added to it
the comments by Secretary Schlesinger to whom I
forwarded a copy of my letter in draft. I think
it is a substantial question which is worthy of
consideration at the NSCIC level.


W. E. Colby
Director

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

22 August 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Modification of Security Classification

REFERENCE : Your Memorandum, Subject: Modification of
the Security Controls for the Products of
Photographic Reconnaissance Satellites,
dated 23 November 1973

1. The referenced memorandum contains the President's approval of modifications of some of the special security controls related to the U. S. photographic satellite reconnaissance program. One of these changes provided that thenceforth:

"The fact that the United States Government conducts a photographic satellite reconnaissance program for foreign intelligence collection be classified SECRET."

2. The purpose of this memorandum is to seek Presidential instructions as to whether the above provision shall be continued or changed to provide that the "fact of" the program be unclassified. There is a difference of opinion within the Intelligence Community and the Departments affected with respect to this question.

3. The fact that the U. S. Government conducts a photographic satellite reconnaissance program is widely known and is frequently the subject of press and public comment. Retention of the classification places Government officials in the position of violating the classification or being unreasonably reticent in discussions with the Congress, the press, and the public. Important aspects of the program, such as the resolution, swath width, frequency, etc., should remain classified, but these can remain classified in the same fashion

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as communications intelligence programs remain classified despite unclassified (and statutory) recognition that the U. S. conducts communications intelligence operations. Declassifying the "fact of" the program would also open the opportunity of declassifying individual products of the program for public release where necessary classified aspects are not revealed, permitting greater public understanding of a number of important political or military matters. The erroneous disclosure of the U-2 photography over Cuba in 1962, and its value in convincing the world of the presence there of offensive missiles, was a dramatic example of the potential use of such material. Finally, it is almost impossible to justify the retention of a classification for the "fact of" the program under Executive Order 11652 standards for classification.

4. Objection to the declassification of the "fact of" the program rests on two major arguments. The first is the possibility that official admission by the U. S. of such programs could produce difficulties in our relationships with certain of the nations photographed. The question could become an issue in the United Nations over "unauthorized surveillance" of national territories, and the Soviet Union could be particularly disturbed by public recognition of this capability, which it has veiled under the euphemism of "national technical means of verification" in the Strategic Arms Limitation Agreements. The second reason is that declassification of the "fact of" the program could loosen the disciplinary tradition which has grown up within the Intelligence Community and its customers around this program as a whole. The fear is that this could then result in the exposure of details and related aspects of the program which continue to require the highest classification, e.g., SIGINT satellite reconnaissance, resolution, etc. In this view, declassification of the "fact of" would be apt to encourage public discussion of this field and lead to an erosion of the security standards which have characterized it, especially at lower echelons where the subtlety of declassification of only the "fact of" the program might be lost.

5. This matter was discussed in some detail at the USIB meeting on 11 July 1974, and the various points of view above articulated. I advised the USIB membership that I would present the alternate views when presenting the question for decision.

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6. I recommend that this question be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the National Security Council Intelligence Committee. My own recommendation is to declassify the "fact of" photographic satellite reconnaissance by the U. S. I believe this should be done as follows:

a. The President be advised of the argumentation above and issue a decision that the fact that the U. S. Government conducts a photographic satellite reconnaissance program for foreign intelligence collection will be unclassified.

b. The change be implemented simply by changing the appropriate security regulations.

c. There be no official public announcement of the change, and an effort be made to minimize publicity about it.

d. All other aspects of the U. S. satellite reconnaissance program for the collection of foreign intelligence remain classified in accordance with existing regulations.


W. E. Colby

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